Glasgow

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE of DIRECTORS

Glasgow. OF THE

CHAMBER

OF

COMMERCE and MANUFACTURES

OF

GLASGOW,

ON THE

BILL

BROUGHT INTO THE

HOUSE of COMMONS

Laſt SESSION of PARLIAMENT,

FOR REGULATING THE

IMPORTATION and EXPORTATION

OF

CORN, &c.

As amended by the COMMITTEE of that HONOURABLE HOUSE.

GLASGOW:
PRINTED BY A. DUNCAN AND R. CHAPMAN.
M.DCC.XC.

BRITISH MUSEUM
ET MUNI

REPORT *of the Committee of* DIRECTORS *of the Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures of Glaſgow, on the Bill brought into the Houſe of Commons laſt Seſſion of Parliament, for regulating the Importation and Exportation of* CORN, *&c. as amended by the Committee of that Honourable Houſe.*

THIS Bill, framed on the principles recommended by the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade, in their repreſentation to his Majeſty, which was particularly under the view of this Chamber in the Third Report of their Committee on the Corn Laws, having undergone conſiderable alterations during the laſt Seſſion of Parliament, is intended, as we are informed, to be again brought in, early in the enſuing Seſſion, either in the ſame form, or with ſuch amendments as may be thought expedient, and therefore demands the attention of the inhabitants of this part of the country, who are deeply intereſted to get certain parts of it altered, which otherwiſe muſt affect their riſing manufactures, and retard their proſperity in a very great degree.

It may be obſerved in general, that though this Bill contains ſeveral amendments and improvements in the late ſyſtem of Corn Laws, and a repeal of a number of ill-judged reſtraints heretofore impoſed on the inland trade in Corn, yet it does not extend to that complete reform which appeared to this Chamber to be expedient, and even neceſſary, to the ſafety and proſperity of the country, eſpecially now that it requires, as is evident from their Lordſhips Report, a conſiderable ſupply by importation, in addition to

all the Corn produced at home, for the ſuſtenance of the inhabitants.

The principle recommended by their Lordſhips, and profeſſed to have been followed in framing the Bill, of eſtabliſhing one uniform law over the whole united kingdom, with ſuch variations in the mode of executing it only, as the local circumſtances of the two countries require, has always appeared to this Chamber to be proper and expedient, and much ſafer for this country, even though attended with ſome inconveniences, than to continue under a different ſyſtem, though apparently, for the preſent, more advantageous to us; but it appears to your Committee, that in one part of the Bill there is a want of this uniformity; and in another, too little regard is paid to the local circumſtances of this country, in regulations which affect the general bread and ſuſtenance of its inhabitants, while they will not have a ſimilar effect in England, as regarding an article little uſed there, when compared with what it is here.

The firſt of thoſe particulars is, the manner of forming the diſtricts into which this country is propoſed to be divided; and the other is, the regulations which regard the importation of Oatmeal—to which we wiſh, at preſent, to call the attention of the Chamber, as materially affecting the diſtrict to which we belong.

In the Bill now before us, great attention has been paid in England, to ſimilarity of circumſtances in the counties connected together; in ſo much that, in that country, the maritime counties alone, have been divided into no leſs than *twelve* diſtricts, of which ſeveral conſiſt of no more than two counties, and, in one inſtance, a ſingle county, that of Norfolk, forms a

diſtrict by itſelf.—In Scotland, on the other hand, the whole counties, inland as well as maritime, have been claſſed into no more than *three* diſtricts; and, we are ſorry to add, with leſs attention to ſimilarity of circumſtances, than the diviſion of England had exemplified, or is conſiſtent with the ſituation and wants of the inhabitants of many parts of the country.—

The regulation of importation, by the average of a whole diſtrict, even ſuppoſing the greateſt ſimilarity of circumſtances, muſt, of itſelf, be more unfavourable, than that by the counties ſeparately, to this part of the country, and all others, which, like it, muſt have recourſe to importation for the neceſſary ſupplies of Corn: And it is obvious, that the natural diſadvantages of ſuch ſituations muſt be highly aggravated by being connected in the ſame diſtrict with more plentiful or cheap counties.

We ſhould not however object to the counties of Lanark, Renfrew, Dumbarton, Argyle and Bute forming one diſtrict, becauſe all theſe counties are in circumſtances ſo far ſimilar, as to require *in all ſeaſons*, conſiderable importations of Corn for the ſuſtenance of their inhabitants; but the addition propoſed in the Bill, of the plentiful and cheap counties of Ayr and Wigton, would, in our opinion, prove in ſome reſpects injurious to them, and would moſt aſſuredly prove grievous to us, and ſtill more diſtreſſing to the fiſhing ſtations, and other parts of the weſt coaſts of Roſs and Inverneſs ſhires, and the iſlands adjacent, whoſe importations are to depend on the average price of our diſtrict.

If it be any object to the counties of Ayr and Wigton, to enjoy the privilege of exporting with the benefit of the bounty, or even a free coaſting trade to

other parts of Britain, their being connected with us muſt prove injurious to them; for the high prices in our markets, muſt have ſuch an effect upon the average of the diſtrict, as to preclude all hope of future exportation on the bounty; and while the ports of the diſtrict thus remain ſhut againſt exportation, they will find themſelves reſtrained by a ſubſequent clauſe, (page 24) from ſending Corn coaſtwiſe into any other diſtrict, from which exportation is permitted at the time.

On the other hand, ſuch a connection cannot but prove a grievous oppreſſion to us, as the average of the diſtrict would neceſſarily be ſo affected by the low prices in theſe two counties, that the prices in our markets muſt be conſiderably raiſed above their uſual rates, before the neceſſary ſupplies could be obtained by importation, either for our own wants, or thoſe of the fiſhing ſtations, and other places depending on the ſame average; and the conſequences to be expected are diſtreſs, diſcontent, and popular commotions.

It is ſurely contrary to the intent and meaning of the propoſed law, to ſubject any part of the country to ſo grievous a calamity. The law is indeed intended to encourage the Britiſh farmer, by preventing importation till Corn riſes to certain prices, fixed by Parliament, as indicating wants which then demand a ſupply, wherever it can be found.—We neither aſk nor expect any relaxation of the general rule in our favour, but we are ſurely entitled to claim the benefit of the common privilege, of ſeeking ſupplies from abroad, whenever the prices at home are at or above the ſpecified rates.—What would be thought of a direct propoſal, that the counties of Lanark, Renfrew, Dumbarton, Argyle, and Bute, which comprehend

the moſt populous manufacturing diſtrict in Scotland, and which, as well as the fiſhing ſtations on the weſt coaſt, are known to require, *in all ſeaſons*, conſiderable ſupplies, by importation, ſhould be reſtrained from importing theſe ſupplies, until the prices at home ſhould conſiderably exceed the legal rates? Would not ſuch a propoſal be treated with indignation, as oppreſſive and unjuſt? And yet, this very effect would be indirectly produced, by connecting us in one diſtrict with the counties of Ayr and Wigton, or any others equally plentiful and cheap. A grievance, to which Parliament, when properly informed, can never give countenance.

In one word, humanity, juſtice, and the meaning and intent of the propoſed law, equally forbid that theſe two counties, ſhould make part of our diſtrict; and we are perſuaded that it can only require an explanation of theſe circumſtances to have them ſeparated from us, and either formed into an additional diſtrict by themſelves, or added to ſome other diviſion of the country in circumſtances more ſimilar to theirs, as to the wiſdom of Parliament ſhall ſeem proper.

The other particular, to which we wiſh to call the attention of the Chamber, is the prohibition to import *Oatmeal* when *Oats* are under 18s. per quarter.

This regulation was introduced in order to obviate the complaint made on account of the unfavourable terms on which Oatmeal has for ſometime paſt been importable into Scotland, compared with thoſe on which it was permitted to be imported into England;—but the ground of our complaint had been miſtaken.—We did not complain, as ſeems to have

been ſuppoſed, becauſe our importation of Oatmeal was regulated by the price of *Meal*, and not by that of *Oats*, but becauſe we were reſtrained from importing until our Meal exceeded 16s. per boll, while our fellow-ſubjects of England were permitted to import Meal, whenever Oats were at or above 16s. per quarter, equal to about 13s. 4s. per boll of Meal, which laſt was our import price, previous to the act of 13 Geo. III. ſtill in force with us. Accordingly, what we claimed as our right, was either to have the import price reduced to the former rate of 13s. 4d. per boll, or to be put on the ſame footing with our fellow-ſubjects of England, and permitted to import Meal whenever Oats were at or above 16s. per quarter; not becauſe we choſe to be regulated by the price of Oats rather than that of Meal, for the laſt is much better adapted to the ſtate of our markets, more ſteady, and leſs liable to abuſe than the firſt, but becauſe the terms on which the importation of Oatmeal was permitted in England were ſo much lower, and of courſe more favourable for this part of the country, which requires *conſtant ſupplies* by importation for the ſubſiſtence of its numerous and induſtrious inhabitants.

A few words will indeed be ſufficient to ſatisfy every one, that to regulate the importation of *Oatmeal* by the price of *Meal*, rather than that of *Oats*, is not only more eligible in itſelf, but *abſolutely neceſſary*, properly to accommodate it to the circumſtances of this part of the kingdom.

It is more eligible in itſelf, as well on account of the uncertainty which muſt always prevail when the importation of one article is made to depend on the demand for another, as for the reaſons already mentioned, that *Meal* is much leſs variable in its value,

and of courſe leſs liable to miſtake, than *Oats*, even where the markets for both are equally regular, and ſtill more ſo in this country, and particularly in our parts of it, where there are *no regular markets for Oats.*

It is a fact, of which no one converſant in ſuch matters can be ignorant, that Oats vary ſo much in their quality and value, not only in different counties, but in different parts of the ſame county, and even of the ſame farm, that one quarter may be worth and ſold for double the price which another quarter will bring; and, when to this is added the difficulty, or rather impracticability, for want of regular markets, of aſcertaining the quantity, quality, and prices of the different kinds of Oats ſold, the uncertainty of diſcovering the true medium price, as well as the opportunity given for evaſion and abuſe of the law, muſt be very evident.—On the other hand, it is equally well known, that the value of Britiſh *Oatmeal*, whatever be the quality of the Oats it is made from, varies much leſs than the price of Oats, ſeldom exceeding a tenth or a fifteenth of the price in the ſame market, which, with our having regular markets for *Meal* in every conſiderable town, makes it eaſy, at all times, to aſcertain with accuracy the true price of the article, and the correſpondent wants of the people.—Theſe circumſtances taken together, evince, in the cleareſt manner, the expediency, and even neceſſity of regulating the importation of Oatmeal, at leaſt in Scotland, not by the price of Oats, but by that of the Meal itſelf.

Another circumſtance, ariſing from the law itſelf, were the regulation to ſtand as in the Bill, might be productive of much inconvenience, and ſometimes of real diſtreſs to theſe parts of the country.—There might happen to be a want of *Meal*, while the per-

miſſion to import *Oats* at 16s. per quarter, prevents the price from getting up to 18s. ſo as to authorize the importation of Meal. It is not a ſufficient anſwer to this, to ſay, that if we have Oats, we need not be long in want of Meal; for it has happened, and may happen again, from the ſeverity of our froſts, which, in ſome inſtances, are known to have continued for three months together, that the country, with Oats in plenty, has ſuffered dearth, and even been threatened with famine, for want of water to grind them.—Beſides, as Oatmeal keeps better, and is leſs liable to heat, and other damage on ſhip-board, than Oats in the ſtate of Corn, it is not only a more deſirable importation, but the dealers in Ireland, for that very reaſon, often convert the greateſt part of their Grain into Meal, ſo that Oats cannot always be had; and veſſels ſent for Corn, might, though Meal was to be found in abundance, be obliged to return empty, from the uncertainty of its being importable at the time, occaſioned by its being regulated by the price of Oats.—The ſituation of our country is indeed ſuch, that we cannot depend on regular ſupplies of bread for the inhabitants, without having it in our power to import either Oats or Meal, as ſhall beſt ſuit the ſtate of our markets; nor is this any thing more than the privilege enjoyed by our fellow-ſubjects of England, who are permitted, when a ſupply of bread is wanted, to import either Wheat in Corn, or Wheat-Meal or Flour, as can be moſt eaſily procured abroad, or beſt ſuits the demand at home.

At one time, this Chamber were not without hope that the importation of Oatmeal would have been regulated by Oats at 16s. per quarter, or rather by the correſpondent price of Meal at 13s. 4d. per boll; but the Committee of the Houſe of Commons having ſuggeſted the limitation of the importation of Meal when

Oats are under 18s. per quarter, which correſponds, as nearly as can be calculated, to Meal at 15s. per boll, the terms granted us may poſſibly not be ſo favourable as we once expected; though it muſt ſurely be difficult to find any good reaſon for permitting the importation of Oats to feed the ſumpter horſes of the opulent and luxurious, on eaſier terms than that of Meal to ſupply the neceſſities of the labouring and manufacturing part of the people, whether to the north or ſouth of the Tweed, who are not the leſs uſeful and important to the State, that they are ſatisfied with ſuch homely fare.

But whatever be the terms, on which we are permitted to import, which, after making our circumſtances known, we muſt leave to the wiſdom and ſubmit to the authority of Parliament, the expediency of making the price of Oatmeal the ſtandard, at leaſt in Scotland, for regulating the importation of that article, in preference to that of Oats, remains the ſame; and as the reſtraint on importation will ſtill be equal, in reſpect of the price, and, at the ſame time, more eaſily aſcertained with truth and accuracy, and leſs liable to abuſe, we cannot doubt of its proving ſatisfactory to all concerned.

The neceſſary amendment on the Bill may be made by an alteration of a few words of the *proviſo* in the clauſe immediately preceding table D, ſubſtituting, in place of *Oats* under 18s. per quarter, *Oatmeal* at ſuch rate per boll, as to the wiſdom of Parliament ſhall ſeem proper, which will then run thus, "Provi-
"ded always, that no Oatmeal ſhall be imported into
"this kingdom, under the like penalties and forfei-
"tures, when the price of *middling Britiſh Oatmeal*
"*ſhall appear, according to the method directed by this*
"*act, to be under* *per boll, of* 128 *lib. Scots trois,*

" *or* 140 *lib. avoirdupoiſe weight*, except into the ports " herein after named, for the purpoſe of being there " warehouſed, according to the directions of this act."

It is hoped, that theſe amendments, ſo neceſſary for Scotland, will be equally agreeable to England.—If not, the alterations may be confined to Scotland alone. —Nor is ſuch an alteration any departure from the principle of uniformity of the law in both countries; but only a neceſſary variation in the execution of it, of the ſame kind with the different modes of aſcertaining the price, and equally proper and expedient from the particular circumſtances of the country.

On the other parts of the Bill, we have very little to obſerve.

It is ſcarcely neceſſary to notice, that the amendments propoſed will require a few correſpondent alterations and additions in the other parts of the Bill, to which whoever takes charge of the buſineſs will attend of courſe.

It may be proper alſo to add a few words in the clauſe which preſcribes the method of aſcertaining the prices in Scotland, directing the juries to be convened *in open court, at the uſual court place, at twelve o'clock mid-day.*

The clauſe E, (bottom of page 25,) being the firſt that relates to the Forth and Clyde Navigation, ſhould not be confined to *Oatmeal*, but extended to *Corn, Meal, and Flour*, as is the caſe with all the ſubſequent clauſes for regulating the manner of uſing that navigation; in which ſubſequent clauſes too, there appears to be an unneceſſary ſpecification and repetition

of *Oatmeal*, which ſhould be ſtruck out, as that article is unqueſtionably comprehended under the more general terms, *Corn*, *Meal*, *and Flour;* ſo that the addition of it, in theſe clauſes, can ſerve only to occaſion ambiguity in other parts of the Bill, where it is not added, and would be ſuperfluous.

We have only further to obſerve, that the penalties and forfeitures, annexed to deviations from the propoſed regulations, as to importation and exportation, appear to be in ſeveral inſtances unneceſſarily ſevere, and may, if not ſome way alleviated, prove very grievous and diſtreſſing to ſhip owners, and others concerned in the trade. It is ſaid to be intended to remedy theſe, and a number of ſimilar grievances in other laws, by one general act, for the relief of innocent ſhip owners and fair traders.—And to this, thoſe particularly intereſted will no doubt attend.

Archibald Grahame.

Peter Murdoch.

Glaſgow, Nov. 2d, 1790.

Dugald Bannatine.

John Laurie.

Gilbert Hamilton.

Glaſgow, 2d Nov. 1790.

At a Meeting of the DIRECTORS of the CHAMBER of COMMERCE and MANUFACTURES, eſtabliſhed by Royal Charter, in this City, held this day in the Tontine Tavern.

ARCHIBALD GRAHAME, Eſq; in the Chair.

The Meeting having taken into conſideration the intended Bill, for regulating the importation and exportation of Corn, &c. with the foregoing Report of their Committee thereupon,

RESOLVED,

That, though the ſaid Bill contains ſeveral amendments of the late ſyſtem of Corn Laws, and a repeal of a number of injudicious reſtraints heretofore impoſed on the inland trade in Corn; yet it is far ſhort of that complete reform in theſe laws, which appears to this Chamber to be expedient and even neceſſary to the proſperity of this country.

RESOLVED,

That the principle recommended by the Lords of the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade, and profeſſed to have been followed in framing the ſaid Bill, of making the law uniform over the whole united kingdom, with ſuch variations in the mode of execution only, as the different circumſtances of the two countries neceſſarily require, has always appeared to this Chamber, to be the beſt ſafeguard to this country againſt partial and oppreſſive regulations, ſuch as we have heretofore, in ſome inſtances, experienced; and, for that reaſon, greatly to be preferred, even though attended with ſome inconveniences, to our continuing

under a different ſyſtem, though apparently, for the preſent, more advantageous to us.

RESOLVED,

That, in one particular, in the Bill before us, this principle of uniformity has been departed from; the maritime counties of England alone, forming *twelve* diſtricts, while the whole counties of Scotland, inland as well as maritime, are propoſed to be thrown into no more than *three;* and, as an average of the prices of a whole diſtrict, muſt, in itſelf, be more unfavourable to the freedom of trade, than if regulated by the price in each county ſeparately, this grievance, when increaſed by the great extent of the Scots diſtricts, cannot but often prove, not only inconvenient but highly diſtreſſing, eſpecially to thoſe parts of the country which require conſtant ſupplies of Grain by importation, for the ſuſtenance of their inhabitants.

RESOLVED,

That, (leaving it to the other parts of the country to judge for themſelves,) the counties of Lanark, Renfrew, Dumbarton, Argyle and Bute, form a diſtrict as extenſive as is conſiſtent with the regular ſubſiſtence and ſafety of the inhabitants, and of the fiſhing ſtations and other parts of the weſt coaſts of Inverneſs and Roſs ſhires, and the adjacent iſlands, which are made to depend for importation on the average of our markets.

RESOLVED,

That, the addition, propoſed in the Bill, of the two plentiful and cheap Corn-counties of Ayr and Wigton, would not only be in ſome reſpects hurtful to themſelves, but would neceſſarily have the effect to reſtrain importation of the ſupplies required for the daily bread of the inhabitants of the counties above-

named, and the fiſhing ſtations on the weſt coaſt. until the prices in our markets, (already too high,) conſiderably exceed the rates fixed by Parliament, contrary not only to humanity and juſtice, but to the true intent and meaning of the law itſelf.

RESOLVED,

That, in another particular in the ſaid Bill, the neceſſary variation in the execution of the law, required by the peculiar circumſtances of this part of the kingdom, has not been ſufficiently attended to, in ſo far as the importation of Oatmeal, an article eſſential to the ſubſiſtence of the people of Scotland, is propoſed to be prohibited while *Oats* are under 18s. per quarter; though it is well known, that the different kinds of Oats are ſo variable in quality and value, that it is extremely difficult to find the fair medium price, even in the moſt regular markets, and which muſt be next to impracticable in this country, and particularly in this part of it, where we have *no regular market for Oats.*

RESOLVED,

That, beſides the impropriety of making the importation of one article depend on the demand for another, the price of *Oatmeal* which varies little in quality and value, and which may at all times be aſcertained with truth and certainty, by means of the regular markets for it in every corner of the country, is a much better meaſure of the wants of the people, and of the importation neceſſary to ſupply theſe wants, than that of Oats, and is not only more ſteady, and more eaſily aſcertained, but leſs liable to evaſion and abuſe.

RESOLVED,

That, this Chamber being informed, that the ſaid

Bill is intended to be brought into Parliament, early in the enſuing Seſſion, think it incumbent on them, to call, as they now do, the attention of all concerned, to this important buſineſs, and to requeſt their concurrence and ſupport, in recommendations to their repreſentatives in Parliament, and ſuch other meaſures as ſhall be thought expedient, in order to have all proper amendments made on the intended Bill; and particularly, that the two counties of Ayr and Wigton be ſeparated from the Clyde diſtrict; and that the importation of Oatmeal be regulated, not by the price of Oats, but by that of Meal itſelf.

The firſt of theſe particulars is eſſential to the comfortable ſubſiſtence and proſperity of the counties of Lanark, Renfrew, Dumbarton, Argyle and Bute, a diſtrict of conſiderable importance to the country, from the extenſive and growing manufactures therein eſtabliſhed, and rendered ſtill more ſo by the fiſhing ſtations and other parts of the weſt coaſt and iſlands adjacent being made dependent on them. The other is of importance to every part of Scotland, and to the landed as well as the commercial intereſt, as it propoſes an equal check in the reſtraining price, more ſteady, more eaſily aſcertained, and leſs liable to abuſe, than that of Oats. Nor can we doubt of ſucceeding in both, when the matter is properly repreſented.

RESOLVED,

That the ſaid Report, and theſe Reſolutions be printed, and that the Reſolutions be alſo inſerted in the different Newſpapers.

Extracted from the minutes of the Chamber,

Gilbert Hamilton, Secretary.

BRITISH MUSEUM